

BARING THE SOUL OF GERMANY

Former Director of Krupp's Reveals Moral Degradation That Has Eaten Into Every Stratum of Society in the Fatherland

By Edmond McKenna

GERMAN treachery, German ambition, German duplicity—the details of the many crimes with which the war was prepared and has been fought, have already been revealed to the world in the writings of Wilhelm Muehlon, former director of Krupp's and an unwilling and disgusted participant in the councils of the All-Highest. But much as has been printed of his revelations, all has not yet been told. The first complete translation of his diary, translated by William L. McPherson and published by G. P. Putnam's Sons under the title of "The Vandal of Europe," gives new proofs of the debasement of Germany.

In addition to what has previously been published in this country, the diary contains many passages in which Dr. Muehlon dissects and analyzes the very soul of Germany—and finds it as evil as her deeds. He points out the moral degradation which lies behind the wrongs she has done, and brings out proofs of cruelty, brutality, cowardice, craftiness and utter lack of conscience. And all this because, though a German and living inside Germany and depending on the same information or misinformation that has been fed to all under the Kaiser's rule, he was uncorrupted by the visions of power which have been conjured by the German rulers to appeal to the lust and greed of their subjects.

Reveals Very Fibre Of the Prussian Soul

Thus it has remained for him to reveal the very fibre of the Prussian soul and the motivation of Prussian thought and action as it could not have been attempted by any one outside the empire.

Dr. Muehlon's book is a personal diary kept by him during the first few months of the war. What characterizes the revelations of Herr Muehlon even beyond their truth is their almost unbelievable sanity, coming as they do from the raving vortex of a world in the first throes of its madness.

In making these revelations about his countrymen Dr. Muehlon has at the same time revealed himself as probably "the only European in Germany." The book was not written in any propagandist sense nor for any possible effect it could have on war or peace in the future; it is a confession, not of sins, but of feelings and instincts. The entries in the diary began, "In the first days of August, 1914," and among them are found this inconspicuous note:

"From now on I shall set down every day, if possible, some comments, and let them stand just as they were written. Even though occasion should arise hereafter to correct them or amplify them, it seems to me more important to preserve a clear image of my current thoughts, opinions and experiences."

So the work, it seems, was done for his own sake, to preserve his own thoughts, opinions and experiences. There are very few happenings in the world during the first few months of the war on which Muehlon has not a biting opinion to express. His observations cover nearly all departments of civil and military life—the invasion of Belgium, the debauchery of business and of the press, the denial of Russian atrocities, the deportation of Belgians and the treatment of prisoners, the attempt to debauch statesmen and the press in neutral countries, the Prussian lust for territory, international law and the conduct of authors and artists.

Plunder and the Omnipotent Bribe

While excoriating the institutions and the people of his country, he says, directly and by implication, many times that he would gladly testify to the existence of other sentiments than those he attributes to them, if he only could find these sentiments.

Plunder was the watchword of the dominant classes in Germany before the war, according to Dr. Muehlon, who because of his position as director of Krupp's can speak with authority, and the bribe the best way of advancing ordinary business as well as state policy.

Of some of the German officers the best recommendation Dr. Muehlon can give is that they appear to him "like idiots playing with toys." Of the soldiery in general he is painstakingly lucid, if not so epigrammatic. This is his opinion of them after a few weeks' operations in Belgium:

"They are like barbarians who become intoxicated with victory, even if it has been achieved at the expense of defenceless opponents. With

wild hurrahs they are already distributing in their tents the treasures and the men taken as booty. But if a strong, courageous enemy, of whose approach in their hour of victory they had had no warning, should approach them, they would again take hasty flight to their swamps and forests and would be as content with these as they formerly were eager to roam all over the world, mere vagrants, without any understanding of distance or world relationships."

Dr. Muehlon makes a fine distinction between a German and a European, and declares that if Germans should at any time gain the hegemony of Europe "a general exodus of Europeans will occur. The remote corners of Europe will become the most desired places of refuge. With pride and horror every one would insist that he be delivered from the sight of a German."

Late in August, 1914, when things were going badly with France, Dr. Muehlon assures himself, at least, that France will not perish, that, even though she is overrun, she will be able to save her soul, if not her territory.

"Some think that France will turn away from England, and, to save herself, make common cause with Germany against England. But these people are fools. France is no trader, like Germany. Her convictions are not for sale."

Kaiser Urges No Quarter

In a simple, direct note Muehlon pillories the Kaiser. He writes:

"A letter from the front brings me the news that the German Kaiser personally stated before an assembly of officers that he has now enough prisoners and that he hoped the officers would see to it that no more were taken. This news is entirely trustworthy."

An entry tells how the Crown Prince of Bavaria is developing into a similar braggart.

"This gentleman, the brother-in-law of the Queen of the Belgians, issues on Belgian soil an address to his army in which he tells his soldiers that they have now the honor of fighting against the English. England is solely responsible for the war; his troops should, therefore, take ruthless revenge for the evil wrought on the world by England. This sounds like an incitation to give no quarter. It is an encouragement to brutality. Compare it with the tone in which the English commander in chief has addressed his troops: 'Do your duty; do honor to the English name; conduct yourselves respectfully.'"

Dr. Muehlon contrasts the conduct of German troops in Belgium and northern France with the conduct of Russian troops in East Prussia:

"I get news at first hand that the commission for the investigation of Russian outrages in East Prussia, with the Minister of the Interior, the Ober-Präsident, etc., at its head, has returned without findings, except such as could be constructed from the heated fancies of their fellow countrymen. It has not been able to verify a single one of the reported outrages. This is important enough to go into further."

"Hair-raising details of Russian barbarity had been given us. Public opinion credulously accepted these tales, even though they ran to frightful extremes—for instance, that the Russian soldiers made a practice of nailing the hands of little country children to tables. For with us in Germany the Russian soldier is regarded as a mere beast of prey, whose brutality, cruelty, shamelessness and passion for destruction cannot be paralleled, to an equal degree, in any other portion of the human race."

"I had already doubted the representative character of this picture and, on the basis of various impressions of Russia, had imagined that the Russian soldier may well be still more lacking in judgment and still more excitable than the German soldier is, but yet milder, more good-humored and more altruistic than the latter. It must be considered that in Russia there are many and very dissimilar stocks, but I found my conception confirmed in the minute portraits of the Russian mujik drawn by the great Russian authors and in the current news about intellectual movements in all parts of Russia. If any one replies that the Russian soldier blindly obeys his leaders, then I must say that these leaders seem to be, with all their other defects, far superior to our own in whatever concerns honest, humane feelings and inclinations toward justice and magnanimity."

"Germans, be still now and bow your heads. In your boorish simplicity you are a peril to the world."

"What did Hindenburg's troops do when they triumphed over the Russians? The story goes from mouth to mouth: It was not enough that the enemy was driven into the



The Boss:—"The fact is, Bill, I'm fed up with you."

swamps; tens of thousands of them who wished to surrender and sought to clamber out of the morass were pushed back again at the bayonet's point, until they were suffocated and drowned. This was done under orders. Quarter was not to be given. One could not make use at home of so many prisoners. For days and nights the cries of the drowning were heard, so piercing that they sounded above the thunder of the cannon, and many a soldier who was obliged to listen to this clamor of desperation lost his reason.

"I have no absolute assurance that this is true. But everybody says it really happened and no one has a word of regret for it. On the contrary, every one approves it and says it was the only proper thing to do."

Attempt to Debauch The Whole World

The German policy of first debauching its own press and then using it to debauch the press of the enemy and neutral world is set forth by Dr. Muehlon with many incisive particulars. What is beyond the skill of the diplomatic liars is left to the skill of the journalistic liars, or the "Golden Ass," as he calls them.

He writes, by way of introduction to this subject, that—"The Germans try to account for their unpopularity by explaining that they have not sufficiently debauched the foreign press. Mark the word—debauched—not enlightened, or educated. The German conception of the rest of the world is very simple, and our world politics is conducted on this same simple basis."

The press of the Fatherland Muehlon claims is the backbone of its moral and mental destruction; to liken it to a "loathsome reptile" and a "hideous leper" is not too strong for him. He says the press in Germany is as unanimous as it claims to be, and then accuses it of fundamental falsity, injustice, wickedness and hatefulness. Americans should read all that Muehlon has to say about the press of his country.

"The mania of the German press has become revolting. One must avoid many columns of its contents as he avoids mud puddles. I cast a rapid glance of disgust at some newspapers, like one who notices each day that a loathsome reptile, which he cannot kill, is still in the same place. Yes, the press is really unanimous, as it boasts of being. May the German people never suffer under the accusation that what the world hears these days is the free speech of the people through its own spokesmen! The fate of Germany would be frightful if our opponents, in case of victory, should not be more magnanimous than the German press is."

"Even if I did not read the foreign papers, and so could not form a judgment by contrast and comparison, I should still recognize from the speech of the German newspapers that our degradation is the deepest of all. I certainly do not forget that we are in a state of siege, and that every criticism and every expression of opinion not inspired by the government is suppressed with draconic severity. But the newspapers, even in Germany, could not be compelled to follow. They could be silent instead of joining in inciting hate."

Germany Needs New Skin, Heart and Brain

"They do not do this! On the contrary, they outdo the government, toward which their complacency knows no limit. Never will the German press be able to lift the burden of disgrace with which it has laden itself in this war. After the war we must create a new press. The press of to-day is a hideous leper. Germany needs a new skin, as well as a new brain and a new heart."

"I cannot believe that hundreds of thousands who have read the papers in the last week do not share my feelings. What I have to reproach the press for is not so much its ignorance, its philistinism, its lack of taste, its arrogance and its rudeness as its fundamental falsity, injustice, wickedness and hatefulness."

"No single voice is raised which deprecates the tragic fate of Belgium, calls her misfortune undeserved, concedes her any good qualities, pleads for mildness or charity; does not hold her whole population responsible for the excesses of individuals and does not urge that she be dismembered and despoiled."

"No voice asks for serious consideration of the question whether the invasion of Belgium was justifiable, unavoidable, or even advantageous. No; for every newspaper writer assumes without proof that there was no other way out but to ignore Belgian sovereignty; that Belgium had

already abandoned her neutrality; that it was right to make her lick the German hand which she had bitten."

Three Kinds of Special Scoundrels

"The state of siege brings many kinds of scoundrels into the foreground. They offer the government their pens for all sorts of foul deeds, as bravos offer their stilettoes. The picked troops of this infamous army of journalists belong to three classes. They consist, first, of disgustingly stupid officers on the retired list, who, even in time of war, are not worthy as soldiers; secondly, of avowed pastors, who, with an icy soul and a good natured smile, trumpet forth every base deed as a manifestation of German Protestant heroism; and, thirdly (the worst of all), of numerous modern university professors, who, overlaid with titles and distinctions, swimming with every patriotic current, are either mercenaries or bounders who, outside the field of their own specialties, are seeking not clearness and truth but only temporary notoriety."

"This highly respectable scum of three leading Prussian professions wants to make history by lying; wants to create historical sources by making barefaced assertions. Thus it comes to pass that to-day one is looked on with contempt in Germany if one declares that it is unlikely or, at any rate, not proved that the French were the first to march into Belgium or had intended doing so. Yet every day brings to anybody who wants to see new proofs that France respected Belgian neutrality. But go on lying, you barbarians! Truth will hurt you into the abyss."

"The press abuses France no less vilely. Every French statement is false; every French statement is mere manipulation of phrases. The French soldiers fight reluctantly, use dum-dum bullets, ravage and plunder, commit the most atrocious crimes and flee like sheep before the German troops. The financial condition of the country is pitiable; the government is powerless; the generals are either incompetent or are monarchists and are at odds with their English colleagues."

"There is not a glimmer of reason or justice which moves German journalists to show honor to or appreciation of the enemy. Yet occasionally dignified and favorable comments on the German troops reach us from France, and the German press reprints them with pride. Still, this example does not inspire any one here to reciprocate, although there is sufficient occasion. For in this war the French official statements have always told the truth, plainly and unreservedly, even when it was painful to do so, while the Germans are ready to tell the truth only so long as they are winning victories."

Press, Preachers and Professors Pilloried as Three Special Kinds of Scoundrels That Set Themselves to Poison All the Others

Dr. Muehlon's revelations of the debauching of business in neutral countries through the German Foreign Office and the military administration will appeal with peculiar force to Americans after the disclosures of the Bernstorff episodes in the United States. Dr. Muehlon says of this peculiarly German practice:

"When the Foreign Office and the military administration lack channels of their own they go to the big business firms and inquire whether the latter have confidential agents abroad who might transmit to the leading statesmen the millions necessary to induce them to change their views. In doing this it is assumed, as a matter of course, that the ministers of the neutral states—not the press alone—have already been debauched by the other side and that it is only a question of overcoming competition. We no longer seem to believe it possible that any statesman would resist temptation on a sufficiently impressive scale or would prefer to follow an honorable, uncoerced policy dictated by the best interests of his country."

"I could tell much more about these practices, which I have long hated. But to-day I only want to give expression to the thought how horrible it would be if, because of vast sums of money poured into the pockets of dishonest public servants, whole nations were to be sacrificed and, so to speak, farmed out for military purposes. Will there ever be a historian who will investigate these matters and drag them out into the light?"

Prussian Promises And the Poles

The writer of this remarkable diary brings acute analysis to Germany's promise to the Poles of "liberation from the Muscovite yoke." Dr. Muehlon impresses the reader that he knows the exact value of Prussian promises. He writes:

"Germany, in common with Austria-Hungary, promises the Poles 'liberation from the Muscovite yoke.' If Prussia were at war with Austria she would in a similar manner appeal to the population of the glorious kingdom of Bohemia. The purpose is so dirty as to soil the noble word 'liberation.' Nor should we Germans dare to talk of 'the Muscovite yoke.' We wear a yoke ourselves, more decorative, to be sure, but even more galling. And we have subjected the Poles more systematically to infamous treatment than the Russians have. We continue to persecute the Danes and Alsatians to the point of death. But the Poles are to be allowed, for a certain period, to breathe the fresh air and to receive a better prison fare, in order that they may advertise to their brethren, who languish in Russia, the glory of Prussia, and encourage them to overpower the Russian jailer."

"For it must be well understood that in Prussia no one intends giving the Poles anything at Prussian expense. The Prussian frontiers must remain inflexible, like the outlines of the hard-hearted, ignoble conception of the Prussian state. The purpose is simply to incite the Poles against the Czar because one happens to fall out with him—to rob him of his chattels, which we both once stole and partitioned between us. Prussia simply wants to make the war easier for herself. She has not a vestige of love or esteem for the soul or body of the unhappy Polish people. I have always firmly maintained that the subjugation of Poland could never be achieved, even though three emperors should sit on the coffin of Polish freedom, because so long as the Poles lived they would defend themselves. I am therefore filled with bitterness to see what incitements are necessary to convert Prussia into a friend of the Russian Poles."

What is a virtue in Germany was regarded by German officials as the blackest of crimes were it done by any other nation. For instance, the fact that Britain had commandeered for her own use completed and partly completed ships which were being built in British yards for Turkey was looked upon as an unheard of violation of international law, since Turkey was then a neutral country, and as a consequence Turkey was urged to expel all Englishmen within her territories. Dr. Muehlon says of this official Prussian announcement:

"I cannot comment better on talk of this sort than by making the following observation: The War Department and the Marine Office in Berlin have commandeered from the first day of the war all artillery and ship material under construction in Germany for foreign countries, without agreements of any sort with these countries, among which are Argentina, Norway, Brazil, Chile, Switzerland, Rumania, Greece and

Bulgaria. Settlement with the government affected was left to the German private firms, whom the authorities naturally assured against loss. Germany thus censures England for doing what she herself has done for a long time on grounds of military necessity. One cannot carry vilification further. Moreover, Germany is not the guardian of Turkey, which in recent years has chosen quite different godfathers."

More Unscrupulous Than Bismarck

Dr. Muehlon declares he was swept with a genuine sensation of horror when he read the German troops were in Belgium.

"I collect my thoughts and find that our intrusion into Belgium means for us a frightful moral expiation—that we have dealt more unscrupulously even than Bismarck did and that a victorious war will not reinstate us in the confidence of Europe or of the rest of the world."

"That reasons of strategy had induced the invasion of Belgium was, of course, clear to me. Admitting the justice and urgency of these reasons, nevertheless our whole conduct toward Belgium was so brutal, so tricky, so against all political commitments and obligations, so poorly prepared for by diplomatic means, that Belgium could not possibly assent without becoming contemptible for all time. Therefore, we could not expect compliance on the part of Belgium; for we ought to have considered among the possibilities of our policy the crushing of Belgium, the destruction of her cities, the annihilation of her armies and, even more, the oppression of her whole people, who would be obliged to oppose the invaders, even though with the extreme reluctance. And a seizure of Belgium would have involved a certain delay."

"I went to-day among those of whom I expected a clear view and a correct understanding of the act of violence committed against Belgium and I did not conceal my disgust. Unfortunately I found nobody who agreed with me. One said, 'If we had not marched into Belgium the French would have.'"

"I answered, 'I do not believe that.' Why should the French commit themselves to such an adventure which would scatter their inferior forces? In any case we could have waited without danger until the French had taken such a step. News of the first French movement in that direction would have reached us in plenty of time."

"The rumors in circulation to the effect that the French are already in Belgium are entirely incredible. One needs only to consider the matter a little in order to say to himself that in that case the Belgians would be taking hostile action against the French, just as they are now taking it against us. Belgium has long had no greater apprehension than a violation of her independence and neutrality. You can read in all the papers that before our entry into Belgium sentiment there was not unfavorable to us. But even if popular sentiment had been entirely pro-French, I hold it to be absolutely impossible that the Belgians would have made common cause with the French. They were in no way convinced that France would win and they would have had every reason to fear our vengeance."

Finds Proofs of His Opinions

Later in the year, on November 1, Dr. Muehlon comes back to the question of Germany's guilt in invading Belgium. On that date he makes this significant entry for the sake of truth and to justify himself in the opinion he held when the deed was perpetrated:

"I recommend to anybody who may still have doubts as to Belgium's intentions at the outbreak of the war to read the Belgian Gray Book, which has just been issued. Shame on him who, after comparing it with German outgivings, still maintains that Belgium had made any agreements with our opponents or that France ever had any idea of marching through Belgium! Twofold shame on him who doesn't sympathize with that misused country, and threefold shame on him who says that Belgium could have permitted the passage of German troops without letting her honor!"

Almost Tempted To Show Pride

Commenting on a hard fought battle on the Belgian-French border, Dr. Muehlon closes this part of his reflections on the crass barbarity of the German army and state methods by saying:

"I was almost tempted to an involuntary pride over this exploit. But the frightful crime and the frightful sacrifice involved forbade such feelings."

It was Edmund Burke who remarked on the impossibility of indicting a whole people. Muehlon does indict the whole German people through all the strata of its society.